

Rinneberg, Jürgen:

Die Oper “Das stille Zimmer” von Michael Hirsch

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Summary

Michael Hirsch has chosen the mental ‘shadow world’, the realm adjacent to rational consciousness, as the object of his opera. It is into this “alter ego” that the schizophrenia patient Ernst Herbeck has withdrawn, setting up house as a poet unwilling to speak. As a composer with a love for musical theater, Hirsch has integrated the drama concealed in Herbeck’s life and poetic works into the theatrical order of a libretto, creating a dramaturgical, interpretable work of art for the stage.

Herbeck’s story is the path of “helplessness”, of having lived, for which silence is the aim. Hirsch has retraced this path with his music, in which this aim is immediately present from the first to the last bar. He assumes the ethical content of the events and sets this to music so that it addresses its listeners and audience, integrating them and ultimately making them witnesses to the silence.

Hirsch uses all of the possibilities of sound creation and tonal formation. Along with the vocal and instrumental voices, there are also electrical and electronic media which he pushes to their anatomical and technical limits. He does not subject the musical composition of the instrumental and vocal voices to the laws of tonal composition theory, nor does he leave them to chance, such as with a dice in the example of Cage. On the contrary: Even though he grants the performers a great deal of individual creative space, the musical score nevertheless binds them with virtually pedantic strictness to his dramaturgy. His sounds are musical expressions of the emotions and affects of the libretto, but he deploys them in such way that the listener with a more conventional understanding of musical structure can follow.

With this theme and this artistic rendition, Hirsch has created a work which lends a new dimension to the generic term, ‘Opera’.